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## FAO Support to Countries for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

### Executive Summary

This document provides a brief summary of the actions of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It describes the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the activities of the Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (RNE) in its support. Briefly, RNE has initiated the process of progressively realigning its policy programme with the requirements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has also enhanced its role in SDG monitoring, outlook and analysis in the region, converting the Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition into an SDG monitoring and analysis publication. RNE has also co-published Arab Horizon 2030 with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), a 12-year outlook publication focusing on attainment of SDG 2. In addition, RNE supports the achievement of SDG 2 through a Regional Working Group on Food Security and Nutrition as part of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), a consultative forum among regional UN Agencies and the League of Arab States. RNE has supported and will continue to support countries in their Voluntary National Reviews on the SDGs.

## I. THE UNITED NATIONS 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda, or the Agenda) builds on the UN founding vision of peace, well-being, economic stability and the realization of human rights for all. The 2030 Agenda sets forth “a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity” and “seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom”. It is an integrated plan of action structured in four main parts: (1) a declaration, laying out a vision, shared principles and commitments; (2) 17 SDGs with 169 targets; (3) a plan for monitoring and review of progress toward reaching the SDGs at the national, regional and global

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levels; and (4) a description of the means of implementation of the Agenda, focusing on global partnerships.

2. The SDGs are meant to be aspirational and global. While the goals are universally applicable to all countries, it is understood that country-level progress toward the SDGs should take account of different national realities, capacities and levels of development, respecting national policies and priorities.

3. A guiding principle of the Agenda 2030 is to “leave no one behind”. In support of this goal, SDG indicators are to be disaggregated by gender, age, income, geography, occupation, etc. Thus, the all-encompassing nature of the SDGs will be respected in both their aspirations and monitoring.

4. The SDG indicators have been classified into three tiers depending on data availability and level of methodological development. Tier I represents indicators for which an established methodology exists and data is already widely available; Tier II includes indicators for which a methodology is established but data is not easily available; and Tier III includes indicators for which an internationally agreed methodology is not yet developed and data is largely unavailable.

## **II. FAO’S ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE 2030 AGENDA**

5. FAO support to countries has been aligned with the SDGs. Food and agriculture drive across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. FAO’s broad priorities in the 2030 Agenda are towards the achievement of goals defined for: (a) Food security statistics (SDG indicators 2.1.1 and 2.1.2); (b) productivity and incomes of smallholders (SDG indicators 2.3.1 and 2.3.2); (c) sustainable agriculture (SDG indicator 2.4.1); (d) genetic resources for food and agriculture (SDG indicators 2.5.1 and 2.5.2); (e) government expenditure and investment in agriculture (SDG indicator 2.a.1); (f) food price statistics (SDG indicator 2.c.1); (g) equal access to agricultural land (SDG indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2); (h) efficient and sustainable water use (SDG indicators 6.4.1 and 6.4.2); (i) food losses and waste (SDG indicator 12.3.1); (j) sustainable fisheries and protecting small-scale fisheries (SDG indicators 14.4.1, 14.6.1, 14.7.1 and 14.b.1); (k) sustainable forestry and mountains (SDG indicators 15.1.1, 15.2.1 and 15.4.2); and (l) land degradation (SDG indicator 15.3.1).

6. By way of example, FAO support to countries with respect to animal health, animal genetic, and environmental impacts, is aligned with SDGs, whether in the form of support through voluntary contributions or regular programme projects and programmes. A good example of this is the Panama Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock (GASL) meeting where livestock stakeholders worked on their priorities for the 2030 Agenda (which led to the Rotterdam Declaration signed between the International Dairy Foundation [IDF] and FAO for the global dairy sector – an entire industry committing to the UN 2030 Agenda for the first time). Another example showing FAO’s close collaboration with governments is the work of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA). The sixteenth session of the Commission (CGRFA 16) submitted two draft resolutions to the FAO Conference. The resolutions outline the Commission’s contribution to achieving the SDGs, and reaffirm the international community’s commitment to its Global Plan of Action to maintain the genetic diversity of farm animals and domesticated species.

7. FAO support to countries for attaining the SDGs has guided the way FAO operates at the country and regional levels. FAO Representatives within UN Country Teams have begun to operationalize the 2030 Agenda at country level with deeper and more extensive coordination across the UN System than in the past. UN specialized agencies, which have the technical, monitoring and policy expertise necessary to implement the 2030 Agenda, will lead this work at country level. FAO Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) are being updated to reflect the wide range of activities performed by country offices to support SDG achievements. FAO Regional Offices have also begun to align their work to the 2030 Agenda, working more closely with the UN Regional Commissions, leveraging existing mechanisms (e.g. Regional Coordination Mechanisms) and agreements (e.g. Memoranda of Understanding).

8. FAO has a specific role in the monitoring of the SDGs. Each global SDG indicator has been assigned a 'custodian' UN agency. As of 15 December 2017, FAO is a 'custodian' for 21 SDG indicators, of which eight are classified as Tier I, six as Tier II and seven as Tier III. FAO will also act as a contributing agency for four more indicators. The overall number represents a significant increase on the four indicators for which FAO was responsible in the MDGs. As custodian agency, FAO helps to ensure that national data are comparable and aggregated at subregional, regional and global levels. FAO is responsible for the collection, validation and harmonization of data from national sources, estimating regional and global aggregates and ensuring the publication of the indicators on the SDG indicator global database. The data will contribute to annual SDG progress reports that feed into the High-Level Political Forum's follow-up and review processes. FAO has also redesigned its main flagship publications, The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI), The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA), The State of the World's Forests (SOFO), The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) and The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets (SOCO), to include analyses and statistical annexes of SDG indicators under FAO custodianship.

9. FAO provides enhanced statistical capacity development to countries for SDG monitoring, specifically by presenting guidelines and manuals for training programmes, e-learning courses, regional and national training workshops and seminars; technical assistance to develop agricultural censuses and surveys or new data sources for the collection and dissemination of food and agricultural statistics; and technical assistance to help identify national, or regional, specific SDG indicators.

10. The expanded role for FAO in monitoring the SDGs implies much greater involvement of the Organization at country and regional levels than was the case with the MDGs. Decentralized Offices call upon the support of statistical focal points in Regional Offices and headquarters to ensure knowledge is shared and a consistent approach is adopted to the SDGs. Led by FAO's Chief Statistician, a new subgroup of the Inter-Departmental Working Group (IDWG) on Statistics is being established to improve information-sharing and coordination for work on FAO-relevant SDG indicators, bringing together focal points from all relevant technical divisions. The FAO Regional Offices are also increasingly involved in collaborating directly with the UN Regional Commissions which now lead the regional monitoring and reporting process at the regional level within the SDG monitoring framework.

### **III. RNE ACTIVITIES IN 2017 IN SUPPORT OF THE 2030 AGENDA**

11. RNE is part of the overall FAO effort to support the 2030 Agenda at the regional and country levels. At the regional level, RNE has realigned the field programme in the region to the SDGs, and expanded the policy research programme to include SDG monitoring, outlook and analysis. RNE redesigned its annual Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition as an SDG monitoring and analysis publication in line with the Global State of Food and Agriculture. 2017 marked the first year of the redesigned publication available at <http://www.fao.org/3/I8336EN/i8336en.pdf>. RNE also co-authored the Arab Horizon 2030 with ESCWA, whose main goal was to explore the likelihood of reaching SDG 2 by 2030.

12. RNE has supported the establishment of a regional Working Group on Food Security and Nutrition focusing on SDG 2 at the 23rd Meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) held at ESCWA in Beirut, Lebanon, from 20 to 21 November 2017. The RCM has the overall objective to act as a forum for regular consultation and coordination between UN humanitarian and development agencies. The Working Group on Food Security and Nutrition will take advantage of the opportunities to open consultation between UN Agencies and the League of Arab States (LAS) to monitor developments in food security and nutrition in the region, identify countries for joint UN support, host a regional dialogue on food security and nutrition and present an annual or biennial review of food security and nutrition issues representing a UN consensus view for the benefit of member countries. In addition, RNE is committed to supporting the proposed Subcommittee on SDG 2 within LAS.

13. FAO is partnering with ESCWA, LAS and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Investment (AOAI) on the elaboration and adoption by the Arab countries of a comprehensive framework of

indicators for the monitoring of the food security and nutrition situation in the region. The framework will recognize the use of the Prevalence of the Undernourishment (PoU) and the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) as main indicators for the monitoring of food insecurity.

14. FAO is also a partner in the ESCWA and LAS led Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD), which feeds into the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). RNE and ESCWA organized a side-event on food security and nutrition at the margins of the AFSD held in Rabat in 2017. FAO is also contributing to the 2018 AFSD “Natural Resources, Future Generations, and the Common Good”, focusing on SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, and 17, which will be reviewed at this year’s HLPF. FAO will contribute to a special session on “Water and the SDGs: An Arab Perspective”.

15. FAO is supporting countries in the implementation of the SDG 6, target 6.4, particularly on agricultural water productivity and efficiency, in eight countries: Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

16. FAO has supported countries in their efforts to produce Voluntary National Reviews on the SDGs. In Jordan, FAO: (a) produced an assessment of capacity building and policy advice needs for FAO support on SDGs for 2018–2019; (b) carried out capacity-building training of government staff on SDG 2 indicators for which FAO is the custodian agency; (c) prepared an internal note on the role of agriculture in the Jordanian economy; (d) prepared and submitted a Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project proposal on developing a vision of agriculture within the SDGs; and (e) developed a video on FAO’s contribution to the achievement of SDG 2 in Jordan.

17. In the FAO Subregional Office for North Africa, RNE supported a capacity-development workshop for government representatives from Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia on mainstreaming the SDGs into policy for the 21 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship. In 2018, RNE plans to support similar workshops in Egypt and the Sudan.

18. Finally, FAO is also contributing to the multi-agency, cross-sectoral missions on “Main Streaming, Acceleration and Policy Support” (MAPS) to support countries in the process of identification of accelerators for the SDGs prioritization and implementation. FAO will in particular contribute to the MAPS missions in Egypt and Palestine.

19. While the FAO three regional initiatives for the region, “Food Security and Nutrition”, “Small-scale Family Farming” and “Water Scarcity”, are fully aligned with the SDGs additional work and consultation are necessary to fully integrate the SDGs and their monitoring within the regional initiatives.